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ABSTRACT

This survey was conducted to identify service areas and needs of the sixteen libraries in Albany County. Based primarily on personal interviews with the librarians, the report provides information on staffing, community size, financial support, and library programs directed toward the community. A summary showing comparative collection size, circulation and operating budget data in tables follows the narrative presentations on the individual libraries. (DAG)

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TECHNICAL REPORT ON LIBRARIES AND LIBRARY SERVICES IN ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK

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August, 1976

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Prepared by
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The following report on public libraries in Albany County is based primarily on information obtained from personal interviews with the librarians. The interviews ranged from a half hour to an hour and a half over a period of a week and a half. The librarian at the Colonie Public Library branch was not interviewed.

In Albany County there are sixteen libraries including the five branches of the Albany Public Library and the Colonie Public Library branch in the Colonie Shopping Center. They range in size from a collection of slightly over 6,000 items in the Berne Public Library which serves a population of approximately 2,000 to the collection of over 160,000 items in Albany Public's Harmanus Bleecker Library which serves the city of Albany with a population of over 115,000.(1) (More accurately, the City of Albany is served by Harmanus Bleecker and its branches with total holdings of 260,000)

Likewise, the level of staffing in the libraries varies widely, with six of the libraries run by personnel who do not have Master's degrees in library science. Harmanus Bleecker understandably has the largest professionally trained staff with, in addition to the Director and the Administrative Assistant, the equivalent of 25 full-time librarians.

Staffing in the libraries tends to reflect to some extent the respective financial situations of the libraries. There is strong feeling among the librarians, that a professional librarian could not be supported financially in many geographical areas. The relative levels of service in terms of hours the libraries are open, also tend to correspond to numbers of professional staff and sizes of the collections.

As might have been predicted, the service provisions, staffing, and holdings of many of the public libraries in Albany County do not approach the American Library Association's Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966. Underfunding, understaffing, and low public support for libraries as libraries and as service institutions, are at the root of this phenomenon. To cite a few examples, according to the principles of good library service as a promulgator of equal opportunity for individuals in a democratic society, public library service should be universally available.(2) In Albany County, the town of Westerlo is completely lacking a public library. This means that residents of the town must travel some miles to neighboring towns for library service.

Another service standard reads, "Libraries should be open six days a week for the full range of services during morning, afternoon and evening hours."(3) Several of the smaller public libraries in Albany County (Menands Public Library, the New Scotland Avenue branch of the Albany Public Library, the Rensselaerville Public Library, the Berne Public Library, and the Ravena Free Library) are open either fewer than six days a week, or many hours fewer than 40.

A third example of ALA standards is that, "The community library should have a planned and funded public relations program."(4) This recommendation is difficult when viewed in the light of a situation in which a majority of the smaller

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1. As a general rule of thumb, subject to many variables (e.g. the availability of the N.Y.S. Library to Albany County residents through inter-library loan), a library should have some four items (books, periodical titles, audio-visual aids, etc) per capita for its service area. However the data given herein can only be evaluated fully in terms of regional resources also, which could not be done in this study.
2. American Library Association. Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1967), p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 34.

libraries in Albany County lack adequate space for decent-sized book collections, much less funded public relations programs and staff.

Since the purpose of this survey is to identify service areas and needs in the public libraries of Albany County, the information gathered is presented by library with some description of the basic administrative-legal organizations of the libraries, and concentration on existing services and service needs.

ALBANY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Albany Public Library's Harmanus Bleecker Library is the largest and possibly the most influential library in Albany County. It is an association library, founded in 1833 by contract with the city of Albany. Its general policies are set by a library board of from six to eleven members. The board is also responsible for obtaining funding for the library from local government. The Director of the library feels that the board is basically sympathetic to and supportive of the library. Surprisingly, this is not always the case with all the libraries.

Harmanus Bleecker is impressive in terms of the number and variety of services it provides. The focus is on outreach in the inner city. There is an active public relations program whose major challenge lies in reaching disadvantaged inner city areas. Due to the nature of communication patterns in inner city neighborhoods, public relations efforts must be carried out by word of mouth, which is not always easy.

Otherwise, Harmanus Bleecker provides varying services to people of all ages, races, economic levels, and living situations. There are children's programs in most of the day care centers in Albany, including in day care centers run by individuals. The Harmanus Bleecker Library staff has story hours, provides books, films and other audiovisual materials to day care centers, and even trains day care center employees in the use of library materials.

The library is used as a meeting place for a multitude of local organizations and maintains relationships with a number of service agencies in Albany, such as the Boy and Girl Scouts and other agencies serving youth. As is fairly common in libraries in the county, however, there is more of an emphasis on services to children than to the teen or young adult age groups. There exists at Harmanus Bleecker a directory of agencies serving children.

Summer children's programs include stories and movies in the parks in Albany, and the use of the mobile unit provided by the Upper Hudson Library Federation to bring story hours and movies to children. Books are brought to day camps such as the one at Trinity Institute, YMCA camps, and Salvation Army camps. The librarians of the Children's and Young Adult departments visit Albany schools and speak to children and young adults on various topics.

Shut-ins are informally served by interested individuals and sometimes the bookmobile, which will bring books both to individuals and residents of the Albany County Nursing Home, Teresian House, the Ann Lee Home, Guardian Society, and Villa Maria.

Most of the senior citizens centers in Albany work with Harmanus Bleecker or the branches, and there is outreach to senior citizens in various housing projects.

There is a tutorial program in reading for illiterate members of the South End community carried out at the Arbor Hill and Howe branches by the Albany Literacy Volunterrs. There is also a tutorial service for children working through the schools. The "Laubach people" and the Salvation Army also do tutoring in reading with adults. During the summers there are remedial reading programs through CETA (Comprehensive Educational Training Act), who work with the College of Saint Rose when funds are available. There are also other adult reading programs available through other agencies in Albany.

Harmanus Bleecker has a job information center which provides guidance to those who are seeking employment. There is instruction in resume writing and how to go about finding a job. There is minimal job referral through local newspapers and papers around the state, in addition to the microfiche used by the State Unemployment Service. There are career workshops from time to time in the branches.

The library staff is gaining experience in educational counseling for adults who want to return to school. There is also aid to highly motivated adults for learning in the form of self-study guidance.

One of the unique projects at Harmanus Bleecker is the Albany Community Video Project whose purpose is to promote cable television through providing technical advice and equipment. It is predicted that the library will become an important community access point for video programming. The audio-visual librarian also has programs at the Howe branch and at the Albany Street Academy.

There are yearly meetings scheduled for librarians in Albany County to discuss library services, but there does not seem to be, for reasons that are unclear, much communication or activity in this area. Perhaps it is discouraging to consider expansion of services when economic problems are so severe. Operating costs for libraries continue to rise, and funding has not been increased substantially enough to accommodate more than the costs of inflation in many cases.

Also cited were several further problems with adequate library servicing of "all of the people": some communities are difficult to reach by virtue of long distances (such as Westerlo, Knox, and even North Albany, which have no libraries of their own); some types of people are difficult to reach, as, for example, the disadvantaged residents of the inner city mentioned previously; rural populations are often not served or not well served (e.g., parts of Rensselaer); lastly, Albany County libraries including Harmanus Bleecker do not come up to minimum existing standards in terms of hours, funding, service, staffing, or book budgeting.

ALBANY PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCHES

Some of the programs taking place in the five branches of the Albany Public Library have been mentioned already, as they are carried out by the staff of Harmanus Bleecker. The branches are subsidiaries of the Albany Public Library system and so are part of it administratively.

Arbor Hill

The Arbor Hill branch serves a predominantly black, low-income population of approximately 10,000, with a collection of some 12,000 books. The library is located next to the local community center, and is open the same hours, so there is considerable interaction. Children come from the day care center in the community center to use the library.

It can easily be said that this library is geared to children. It is the impression of the librarian, that predominantly children use the library. While anxious to increase the use of the library by adults in the community, the librarian feels that the most important service should be a remedial reading program for elementary school aged children. Such a program existed in the past, but there are presently no funds available for it.

The library is open 39 hours a week including four hours on Saturday as well as hours Monday through Friday. There is a strong attempt to build a good collection of black literature, and to build the paperback books collection for use by adults and teenagers.

The library is only two years old and is staffed by the librarian full-time. There is another professional who works 12 hours at Arbor Hill, and a 20 hour a week library assistant. There is, as with most of the libraries, a need for more room for expansion of the collection and to create room for other services and programs in the library. The whole collection is presently housed in one room.

The library has occasional programs for senior citizens who also come from the community center, but the small size of the library and limited budget (the total book budget this past year was only $900), make it impossible to expand programming or the library collection. The librarian also mentioned a desire to bring more community involvement to the library, and perhaps even to have a local community library board.

The lack of room for growth is a common and frequent complaint, and is a problem with all the libraries with the exception of Bethlehem Public which moved into a new building three years ago, and Colonie Public Library which should be moving into its newly constructed building late this summer.

The Arbor Hill branch works closely, as do the other branches, with Harmanus Bleecker, sending reference questions and requests for job hunting or pursuit of higher education questions to the main branch. There is also occasional referral to Whitney Young Clinic which is just down the street, for medical problems, and to the Equal Opportunity Center for pursuit of education. Arbor Hill and Harmanus Bleecker also work closely together in publicizing programs out of the main library. The Arbor Hill branch is located less than two miles from Harmanus Bleecker, and is accessible to it by public bus.

Delaware Avenue

At the time of the interview in the Delaware Avenue branch of the Albany Public Library on a Thursday afternoon, there was a movie playing in one half of the cramped space, with about ten elementary school aged children watching attentively. The library has a collection of some 20,000 items, but is crowded. The working space for the librarians is limited.

There is considerable programming for children, with pre-school story hours, pre-school movies, and after school movies. Crafts and puppet shows are put on by the staff at Harmanus Bleecker.

The branch is staffed by the librarian and the children's librarian. There is also a half time library assistant and four part-time high school pages. The library is open six days a week for a total of 35 hours, and serves a population of 10,000.

Staff consider that the community is primarily white and middle class, though there is an identifiable population of newly immigrated Italian-Americans. A potential service area for the library is English classes for this section of the community.

The Delaware Avenue branch was mentioned by several of the branch librarians as a real problem area with regard to vandalism by teenagers. The library is used as a social center. Oddly, the hours of the teen center in Hoffman Park do not include afternoons and Saturdays, so the library is chosen as a place to gather. The librarian is very interested in and considering inviting the parents of the children who gather in the library to get together to discuss the situation with the young people to generate dialog and community interest in the problem. Many of the families in the area are large. There is also a strong need for a neighborhood association in the community, as the delinquency problems are not limited to the library. Staff have worked closely with juvenile officials and service agency people in the past, in dealing with the problems of young people "with nothing to do", and is very supportive of attempts that could be made to improve the situation without alienating the young people further.

There are chess lessons given in the branch, with supervision by experienced players for those who want to learn to play or improve their games.

Children and adults from Cardinal McClosky High School, St. James Elementary School, Public Schools 18 and 23, St. Matthews parochial school, Kenwood Convent, various nursery schools and day care centers, and the Sunshine School for mentally handicapped children all use the library.

There is little outreach activity to members of the community with the exception of volunteer provision of books to sick and house bound individuals who use the library.

The library programming is geared primarily toward children, but there is some information available for self-directed learning for adults.

Howe

The Howe branch of the Albany Public Library system is presently involved in a survey of its own of leisure time in its community. So far the survey has yielded the following information which is relevant here: 1) 48% of the community is black; 2) the population served is 10,476 (with a library collection of 10-12,000 items); 3) 3% of the community is illiterate; 4) 32% of the adult population have not completed high school; 5) half or more of the families in the community are at or below the poverty level. This community is unusally economically disadvantaged.

It is easy to see how making a public library a viable and effective community service could be quite a challenge in a community where education and cultural enrichment are likely low on the list of priorities for survival. Interestingly, during the 1930's, the Howe branch was considered the best in the public library system, but it is now reflecting the problems of being in a changing neighborhood which is expected to lost 7% of its population by 1985.(5) Despite this situation, the librarian observed that there has been a decided increase in the use of library materials in the past eight years. At present there seems to be an influx of white-skinned people into the area.

In addition to the librarian, there is one other full-time professional, one part-time professional, two full-time clerks, and two pages who work 25 hours a week each. The library is open six days a week for a total of 39½ hours. Hours are flexible, however. If staff are present in the building and someone wants to use the library, he/she is let in. Additionally, there are story hours for children from area day care centers during hours when the library is not formally open.

Two years ago a request was made through Harmanus Bleecker for Community Development Act of 1974 funds. This would be federal money to add income to the library, but so far there has been no action on this request.

This branch is very involved in its community, and with individual families. It is located on the second floor of a two-story building. The librarian expressed enthusiasm about expanding the library into the first floor to create a community center. There is also high awareness of and referral to various social agencies in the area and in the city. The library is a meeting place for a number of community groups, and works closely with many of them, especially Trinity Institution.

There is no ongoing attempt to reach out to members of the community who do not read, and to raise the literacy level in the area. The outreach is carried out through contacts with local agencies, especially the Adult Learning Center which hires people from the neighborhood to do this kind of public relations.

The Literacy Volunteers work out of Howe. Children come from the public schools and day care centers in the area to use the library, as well as from the Thomas O'Brien School for the mentally handicapped, and the local branch of the James Hall Sunshine School. In the past college volunteers from SUNYA would work with children in the library teaching reading, but there have been no such volunteers during this past year.

Senior citizens comprise the majority of the adult user population, but they seemingly prefer to remain in the senior citizens centers located in housing projects in the neighborhood. Some educational counseling is done in the library. There was formerly a reading program for children with problems learning in school, supervised by a reading teacher, but funds are no longer available for this.

The library also works with the Boy Scouts in the area. Service to shut-ins is informal and sporadic; there is need for more time and staff. There is interaction with the Albany County Health Center, the Albany County Mental Health Clinic, the Albany County Youthful Drug Abuse Clinic, the South End Community Health Center, and the local teen center (which appears to be relatively inactive).

One factor perhaps contributing to the increased use of the library is the existence of a police station in the community. Good relations between the police and the library are maintained, and residents of the area have experienced greater personal safety.

The major potential area of service for this library lies at present in the setting up of a community center in its building. The librarian predicted that the center could be not only a meeting place, but could show movies, perhaps start theater groups, have a place for music practising, and whatever else would be desired by members of the community.

New Scotland Avenue

In this branch, the head librarian, who has a B.A. in librarianship, works with one full-time librarian (with B.A.), one 3/4 time librarian (M.L.S.), one full-time clerk, one part-time clerk, and four high school pages. The holdings of the library as of December, 1975, were over 17,000 items. The book budget for this year is $12,000. It should be pointed out that the adult book budget allotment of $4,300/year allows for the purchase of only about 40 new books a month. The library is open a total of 26 hours a week, but staff observed that the library never seems to be particularly busy. It is located in a predominantly middle class, white residential neighborhood.

The library is geared primarily toward serving the children who attend local schools: School 19, St. Theresa's, St. Catherine's, and Mercy elementary and high schools. The main users of the library are the children and their mothers and senior citizens. There is a minor problem with vandalism during the summer. There was a recent meeting of the staff of Albany Public with representatives of several services to discuss how to deal with this problem. In the past, rowdy young people were merely requested to leave the library.

There is a new New Scotland-Whitehall Road Neighborhood Association in the community which is pushing for more hours at the library, including Saturday hours, but interaction between the Association and the library is only in the beginning stages. The library is located in one very large room, and, as is common, is lacking for space. This lack of space prevents expansion of programming beyond the eight week long, once a week pre-school story hours done in spring and fall, and the summer puppet shows and movies for children. These programs are carried out by staff of Harmanus Bleecker, and staff of the Upper Hudson Library Federation. There is interest in expanding existing programming to include such things as films, programs for young adults and adults in fields like bird watching, antiques, and gardening.

Pine Hills Branch

The Pine Hills Branch of the Albany Public Library is the largest of the branches having a collection of over 42,000 items. It is located in a predominantly middle class, white community which is changing slowly from single family residences to having a good number of apartment buildings. The library is open six days a week, 49 hours during the school year. It is staffed by one full-time and one half-time adult librarians, one full-time young adult librarian, a 3/4 time and a 1/2 time children's librarian (all of whom are professional librarians), a full-time and a part-time clerk, a part-time secretary, and several high school pages.

Like the other branch libraries, Pine Hills sponsors, publicizes, and houses programs run from Harmanus Bleecker. Additionally, there are occational meetings of the Pine Hills Neighborhood Association in the library. The most recent issue

of concern is the creation of an Albany chapter of the 4-H Club. The library also sponsors after-school movies for children. (List on file). There are also pre-school story hours and programs, and programs for mothers.

In the past the Literacy Volunteers worked out of Pine Hills. Books are brought to shut-ins on an informal basis, but there is no active out-reach to this segment of the population. Requests for materials for visually handicapped individuals are met through the Library for the Blind out of the State Library. The librarian mentioned a need for more large print books in the library to accommodate the visually handicapped.

Pine Hills circulates books and materials to a large population of senior citizens, children and their mothers, and residents of Hospitality House, a half-way house for ex-drug users, St. Ann's Home for Girls, the LaSalle School for Boys, Eden Park and Childs Nursing Homes, and St. Catherine's Child Care Center.

As with all the libraries there is lack of space, a need for expanded facilities, which, if provided, would greatly increase the potential for community and service agency involvement in the library. Occasional requests for foreign language materials are met through use of interlibrary loans.

ALTAMONT FREE LIBRARY

The Altamont Free Library is 5 years old. It has a collection of 10,647 children's and adult books, in addition to a collection of some 600 records. It is housed in the downstairs area of a bank building. The library's policies are set by a village library board, is open four days a week for a total of 21 hours, and receives funds from the State, the Town of Guilderland, and the Village of Altamont.

There is strong Board support for the library. Some people in the community are not aware of its existence, partly because of the location. The community is largely middle-class and white, with many State employees commuting to Albany for work, but there is also a significant rural population, many of whom use the library. The librarian has no specialist training.

The library's service emphasis is on young children for whom there are puppet shows, story hours, and films in the summer months. There is a coupon exchange, patterns and puzzles available, and proposed book review program in the mornings for mothers. The popular fiction materials are the most often circulated. The librarian expressed a desire to expand services to young people, as they are not presently well-served.

There is informal delivery of materials to shut-ins. Residents of Heldeberg House, a facility of the Department of Mental Hygiene for the mentally handicapped, use the library regularly.

BERNE FREE LIBRARY

The Berne Free Library with a collection of just over 6,100 items, serves a population of some 2,000 people, although library users also come occasionally from Knox, Westerlo, Wright, West Berne, and Gallupville. It is a Town-supported library with a board of five members, who, according to the librarian, are basically supportive of their library. The library is open four days a week for only 18 hours, and only 14 hours a week in the summer. The library board allots Town funds.

The library's total operating budget for this year is $4,200. This money includes book budget and staffing, though it does not include payment for the services of the elementary school kindergarten teacher (who has a professional library degree; the librarian does not), who does children's story hours on Saturday afternoons.

In 1969 the library moved to its present location out of necessity. The building it was formerly housed in was rendered useless by an automobile's running into it. The new building is also a community center, housing various local organizations such as the local Historical Society.

The community is fairly homogeneous, white, and populated by State employees who commute to Albany for work. In past years it was more a rural community. There are identifiable groups of senior citizens and children and their mothers who use the library. Last year an attempt was made to induce members of the community to become involved in adult education through the library, but this was unsuccessful due to lack of interest. General lack of interest on the part of members of communities are a common enough problem for expecially the smaller libraries in Albany County.

The other major service of this library is to shut-ins. Since the community is so small, this group is easily identifiable, and known personally by the librarian.

BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Bethlehem Public Library comes the closest of all the libraries in Albany County to providing reasonable service to its community, and can be used as a model of what a public library can be with adequate community support. It is a school district library whose funds are obtained through local taxes. Since the school budget is well-supported in the town, it helps the library, which derives its funding from the same tax-base.

The library contains some 90,000 items to serve a population of approximately 20,000. The community it serves is predominantly middle class and white, but there are low-income pockets in the town. The library moved into its new building three years ago. A new thrust in library outreach and service seems to have been ushered in with the appointment of a new librarian within the past year. It is interesting that up until the present, no annual report had ever been submitted to the library board, although - as for all the libraries in Albany County - an annual statistical report was part of the requirement for being a member of the Upper Hudson Library Federation.

The Library Board consists of five members, one elected each year. This Library Board is independent of the School Board. There are three other professional librarians working in the library: a Reference Librarian, a Children's Services Librarian, and an Audio-Visual Librarian, who is also in charge of interlibrary loans. There are seven full-time clerks, two part-time salaried clerks, and ten high school student pages, in addition to a full-time maintenance employee. The library is open every day of the week in the winter for a total of 71 hours, and five days a week for a total of 60 hours during the summer.

The total operating budget this year for the library, not including the cost of paying off the new building, is an impressive $272,425.

The librarian estimates that some 40% of Bethlehem Public Library users are young children. Many non-working women and senior citizens also use the library, but the long hours are designed also to accommodate the many working and professional people who live in the community. There are occasional visits and use of the library by residents of Albany and Guilderland, and sometimes from even farther away.

Library service to shut-ins is difficult, since this group appears to be somewhat defensive about being identified in this community. Attempts to contact these people are made through local ministers, but contact is most effectively made by word of mouth. It is hoped that contact with this group will improve with outreach by the library's new van service.

Other services provided by the library include referral to the Library for the Blind and Handicapped; books and films to the Good Samaritan Home; workshops for young adults on videotape, babysitting, chess, film, and music; career counseling programs; counseling for adults in pursuit of higher education; visits to schools to do book talks and films, occasional auditorium programs; story hours for children of different ages, films Saturday evenings for children; films Friday evenings for young adults, and Sunday afternoons for families; deposits of library books in the grocery store in Clarksville, the Good Samaritan Home, and at the Elm Street Park swimming pool; Literacy Volunteers who work in the Bethlehem Library; and there is a special information service in the library.

The librarian expressed a need for more outreach and programming for senior citizens and young adults in the community. There is also a need for a program to provide transportation to bring people in the community without transportation to the library, and for more and better knowledge of and referral to local service agencies of all kinds. A unique area for service suggested would be to have part-time youth counselor working in the library to help young people who use the library as a meeting place and who have family or personal problems. The librarian felt this to be a viable possibility in view of the library staff's awareness of young people with problems.

Staff also felt strongly the need for librarians and social agencies to work together, and observed that links to various social agencies could be much improved.

COHOES PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Cohoes Public Library is relatively new. It was created in 1970, though prior to this time there was another public library. It is funded through city taxes and has a library board of five members who are appointed by the Mayor. The library board is supportive of the library.

The population served by the library is Cohoes and Green Island, making up a total of 21,000 individuals. Cohoes is almost exclusively white, predominantly Catholic, and lower income with a high illiteracy rate, though there is a growing suburban-like population. Very few of the residents of Green Island use the library. The main groups served by the library are children and senior citizens. The library is open a total of 51 hours a week (47 during July and August) and is staffed by one full-time professional librarian, one part-time professional children's librarian, a full-time clerk, three part-time clerks, four neighborhood

Youth Corps pages whose numbers increase during the summer months, an adult staff funded by Operation Mainstream, and one employee provided by the Public Work Program.

Since Cohoes is a Model City, the library used the remaining $2,000 of the original $10,000 this year in federal funding, bringing the total operating budget this year to almost $48,000. The total holdings in the library are over 19,000 items.

The library is located in the same building with the Human Services Agency which provides varying services to the people in the city and also provides users for the library. The library and the Agency work together, referring individuals back and forth.

Attempt is being made to start a Friends of the Library group in Cohoes, which could yield additional support for the library.

Services presently provided by the library are impressive in view of the size of the library and its staffing. There are weekly pre-school story hours; a pilot story hour for two and three-year-olds should be continued this fall; there is a once-a-month crafts program for school-aged children. Macrame, needlepoint, embroidery, and Christmas decorations were made in the crafts program. The Upper Hudson Library Federation has in the past provided films for school-aged children, but the librarian felt that this was not too successful due to the uneven quality of some of the films. This summer there are planned pre-school story hours, puppet shows, movies and arts and crafts programs. There is an active attempt to induce more children to read, especially through the puppet shows, since children must read in order to do the productions. The children's librarian goes out to the local schools to do book talks, explain the use of the library, and put on puppet shows.

There is planned a program of outreach to the five public playgrounds in the community, and to circulate paperback books. There are programs done by the library for handicapped children who attend Ca-hoos, a summer camp. Head Start program children come into the library as do the students of the five nursery schools in the area, the Cohoes Middle School, and students of the many parochial schools. There have also been lectures in the library on local history and architecture done by the former City Historian. There is an audio-visual center being set up in the library.

The librarians feel that it is difficult to get adults in the community to use the library, though mothers from the Home Services Agency programs come in, and the night hours of the library make it easier for working adults to use the library. The library has no good parking space, which can be a problem for car-owners wishing to use it. The librarians estimate that 18 or 19 per cent of the population of the area served by the library own library cards and feel that the community's attitude toward the library is essentially positive.

The librarians are interested in doing more in terms of adult programming. One user requested book discussions. There is also a need for outreach to shut-ins which could be done through the Meals on Wheels program for senior citizens, but there is not adequate staff for this.

COLONIE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Colonie Public Library is a municipal public library owned by the Town of Colonie, with a five member board of trustees. The library is funded by the Town. There is generally good support in the Town for the library, according to the librarian. The library is due to move into a new building late this summer, and it is expected that this will provide for innovation in running the library.

The library has a collection of 35,000 items to serve a population of about 70,000. Its community is predominantly white and middle class. The library is open six days a week for a total of 52 hours. At present the children's and reference services are being expanded so that there is now a total of four professional staff in the library.

The librarian was not able to identify any particular categories of library users, but did feel a need to expand service to adults. Presently there are pre-school story hours two days a week, and a playground program planned for the summer in conjunction with the town Recreation Department. It is predicted that the move to the new building will facilitate setting up of film and music programs and various "cultural activities". The two major institutions in the area, the Ann Lee County Home and the County Jail, are not as yet served by the library.

The librarian sees the importance of using a library partly as a community center, and of interacting with recreational facilities. He is not in favor of the bookmobile approach to library service, and as yet, there is little attempt toward outreach with the exception of the creation of a small branch library in the Colonie Shopping Center housing a collection of mostly popular fiction.

In the past there was a program for young adults, but it is presently not operating. The librarian sees a role for public libraries in combatting illiteracy, but there is no such program at Colonie at present. It can be said that much of the undeveloped potential of the library in terms of services will be explored when the move to the new, larger building is made.

GUILDERLAND FREE LIBRARY

This library is an association library with a library board which serves the usual advisory and policy-making functions. Funding is obtained through the Town budget. This year the book budget is $15,000; the present collection contains some 22,000 items. The library is open six days a week for a total of 46 hours with three fewer hours on Saturdays in the summer.

The librarian, the only professional member of the staff, feels that until recently Guilderland, with a population of 25,000, was not particularly library conscious. There is now a strong Friends of the Library group. Guilderland is predominantly white and middle class. There are some Oriental and black families. In addition to the librarian, there are seven part-time library clerks and from four to ten volunteer mothers who staff the library.

Services include outreach to the Westmere and Guilderland Center Nursing Homes; movies Monday mornings for senior citizens who are picked up and brought to the library; story hours for children once a week; and summer programs for children which are run by a part-time employee of the town.

Children from nursery schools in the community use the library, and the library puts on shows in the Town Arts Festival. Otherwise, within the next three years the library is looking to expand its facilities. The librarian expressed interest in expanding library services outside of the library, but the usual lack of funds, space, and staff make it difficult.

MENANDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Menands Public Library's policy-making body is a library board with five members, which has monthly meetings. Funding for the library is obtained through taxing and the Upper Hudson Library Federation.(5) The library is located on the second floor of the VFW building, making it extremely inconvenient for large segments of the community to use it and making outreach a priority.

The staffing at this library consists of a librarian who works 18 hours a week, and an assistant who is a former member of the library board, who works six hours a week. There is a collection of some 19,000 items to accommodate a mixed income level community of some 2,500 people. The total operating budget this year is $7,000 not including $1,100 provided by the Federation.

The major users of the library are mothers and children. There are story hours on Saturday mornings. Otherwise, there are no other services provided by the library beyond the expected book and record circulation, reference, use of interlibrary loans, and the Upper Hudson Federation which loans out books to the library.

It would seem that the library's community is apathetic with regard to the library, though it is a reading community. There is, as always, a need for more room, and for the library to be located on the ground level so that it would be easier of access by people for whom it is difficult or impossible to climb stairs.

RAVENA FREE LIBRARY

This library is funded by the Town of Coeymans and the Village of Ravena. It has a collection of 8,000 books to serve a population of some 7,500 people. There is a five member board of trustees which the librarians feel is fairly supportive of the library. Funds allotted for the library, at any rate, have increased every year for the past several years. The total operating budget to 5/31/76 is almost $11,000.

The community served by the library is semi-industrial with the Atlantic Cement Company the major local employer, although there are also a lot of commuters to Albany who work for the State. The community appears to be mixed economically with some low income families. It is predominantly white, but there are several Spanish-speaking and black families who seldom use the library.

The library is open six days a week for a total of 24½ hours. It serves members of Hillside House, which is a residence for mentally handicapped adults.

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5. Ten percent of aidable expenses, which usually means expenses for books, is returned each year to each library in the Federation. This money is provided for by State law through the State Legislature. There is also minimal funding through a federal grant which provides money to public libraries which meet standards for staffing, hours, and increased funding from one year to the next. The libraries in Albany County which receive this funding are Bethlehem, Colonie, Guilderland, and Voorheesville. Not all the libraries eligible for this money are receiving it.

There are requests for large-print books for the visually handicapped. These requests are met through the State Library. There are shut-ins in the community, but they are brought library materials by relatives, not the library staff.

Other programs include story hours for young children done in spring and fall by an ex-teacher in the community and mother helpers; poster contests; individuals who are job hunting are referred to other agencies. The library windows are used for display and advertising by local groups such as the Historical Society. In the past, there was a summer reading program for children, and a Friends of the Library group, but presently there seems to be no demand for these activities.

The librarians estimate that there is some illiteracy in the community, but so far there is no active attempt to combat this problem. Apparently the Town officials do not use the library. This may say something about the attitude of the Town government toward its library.

The story common to the other public libraries regarding lack of space is relevant in Ravena. The library is housed in one large room, and there is so little space even for sitting to read, that it is no wonder that there is little of other programming. The librarians expressed a need for an expanded facility for purposes of increasing programming and community involvement in the library. The Acting Librarian, a non-professional, began her employment at the library as a volunteer, and over the years has become a paid employee. Her co-worker who also is not a professional librarian, is pleased with the $350/month book budget which is used to purchase mostly books of contemporary interest. There is also a small, special Hudson River historical books collection purchased from Hope Press. There are occasional problems in the library with senseless vandalism.

RENSSELAERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

This very small public library is one of the more interesting with regard to both its community and the amount of activity generated by it, given its size. It runs mainly on contributions, though it is an association library chartered to serve the Town. A minimal amount of money is provided by school taxes. There is a volunteer library board consisting of nine members. It serves an approximately 60 square mile area serving a population of some 1,800 people. The library is exceptional in that there is no financial support provided by the Town, but it is a very low income community, having a large percentage of senior citizens (21.2% of the population is age 60 or over, over a third of whom live below the poverty level).

Most of the books in the library are donated. The collection of 10,000 volumes and a remarkable vertical file containing some 5,000 or more items emphasizing up-to-date occupational information, are of an unusually high quality. The annual budget is less than $7,000, but there are 3,000 hours a year of volunteer time donated to the library. Hence, the library gives an impression of operating on a much larger budget than it does in fact.

The community is very fragmented. The librarian and a member of the library board pointed out that there are seven zip codes used in the Town of Rensselaerville, and that from the library to very short distances away is considered a long distance call. Further, there is division between the Village of Rensselaerville and the rural two0thirds of the population in the Town.

Despite this discouraging state of affairs, with the help of volunteers and much energy this library manages to be open 30 hours a week for five days. In addition to the residents of the Town, the library serves school children from the Greenville Central School; books are sent to Rensselaerville Elementary School of year long loans; biology students of Union College who work on the Huyck Preserve make use of the library, as do residents of the neighboring towns of Berne and Westerlo. The Upper Hudson Library Federation interlibrary loan service is well-used, and the librarians are looking to increase the hours the library is open.

Besides the usual book loans and interlibrary loan and reference services, Rensselaerville Public Library is involved in a project which is unique in New York State and possibly the nation. It involves the use of volunteer drivers to deliver boxes of ten books to pre-school children of rural, usually economically underprivileged families which for one reason or another do not or will not go to the library. These children very likely would not be exposed to books at all if it weren't for this program, and it is reported that the parents of these children also become "turned on" to reading. The books are lent out for two weeks at a time after which time they are retrieved and a new box of ten delivered. Forty families are presently being served. The families were identified through the town board, the local postmen, road men, and the schools, and have been served since October, 1975.

It is hoped that this project can be expanded to include all the Hill Towns in the area, an estimated total of 200 families. The librarian is looking to obtain State funds and CETA funds to become a pilot project of the Upper Hudson Library Federation. It would also be logical for the Berne Free Library to become involved cooperatively in the project.

In the past the library had story hours, but they have never been a great success due to lack of enthusiasm and a small number of young children living in the immediate vicinity of the library. There is the usual need for space to expand, and greater funding.

VOORHEESVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY

This library has a policy making board of five members who are elected by residents of the Towns of New Scotland, Guilderland, and Berne, but who are separate from the School Board, although the school district is the taxing unit. The library is fairly well supported in this community, with a present annual operating budget of $71,400. It serves a community of 7,500 with a collection of 25-28,000 items. Voorheesville is one of the five libraries in the Upper Hudson Library Federation which qualify for a federal incentive grant to promote the growth of libraries. The funds awarded for this year to Voorheesville amounted to $375.

The library is staffed by two full-time professionals, six clerks, and five or six high school pages, as well as the custodian. An observation of the librarian is that libraries which are funded through local taxes and which are school-related, tend to have a more dependable financial base, than association libraries which are possibly more subject to the political variables affecting municipal politics.

Voorheesville is a fairly homogeneous middle class white community, which has had an influx of professional families over the past ten years. The librarian noted that the majority of library users are adults, which contrasts with many of the other libraries where children and senior citizens seem to predominate. The librarian however, emphasizes that the local school libraries exist to serve the school-age members of the community. (This is of course not possible in some of the smaller, poorer communities such as Rensselaerville in which there are no school libraries, or poor ones.)

Programs and services provided by the library, besides the usual books and reference service include the provision of audio-visual materials, pre-school story hours, and Thursday afternoon films for people of all ages. A Wednesday evening film program was abandoned due to lack of attendance. The librarian would like to provide for planned study groups for adults, a job hunting service for adults, including instruction in resume-writing, job hunting, and referral to small businesses and other employers in the community doing hiring. The librarian holds the philosophy of "library as information center" and maintains that a library can perpetuate itself by becoming indispensable to its community.

WATERVLIET PUBLIC LIBRARY

This public library started as an association library, but it is now a city public library with an advisory board of 12 members. According to the professional librarian, the board is supportive of the library, but the community is poor, mostly working class, with a shrinking population of less than 13,000, due to companies leaving the area.

The library houses 11,000 items and is staffed by the librarian, one eight hour a week paid professional assistant, one high school page who works six hours a week, and volunteer time contributed by 14 members of the community. The proposed total operating budget for 1976 is $13,400. The library is open six days a week for a total of 33½ hours, and five days and 30 hours in the summer.

In the past the library circulated more books to children than adults, but this is changing due to the hiring last year of a librarian for the local elementary school with consequent increase in use by children of the school library. There is a significant senior citizen population in Watervliet.

Despite its size and small staff, there are a number of programs run at the library: book discussions, film programs, craft programs, puppet shows; books are delivered to the Senior Citizens' Center and to shut-ins. The Friends of the Library also sponsored a lecture-demonstration by Leonard Weber, a local artist, and a flea market-antique show in 1975. School classes also visit the library.

The librarian expressed interest in increasing interaction between the library and other service agencies in the Albany County area, and wants specifically to hold a bicentennial exhibit, and expand the pre-school story hours.

There is need for larger facilities, there are disruptive children in the library during the winter months. The librarian is looking to take the library to a larger building in Watervliet, which would be housed with the Senior Citizens Group. In the past, the Elks and Rotary Clubs donated funds to the library, but this is no longer the case.

In conclusion, it can safely be generalized that public libraries in Albany County provide an admirable range of services to library users given the limited funds, staff and space available. The librarians taken as a group appear to be hard-working, dedicated individuals who perhaps could exercise more assertiveness in their communities, with their library boards, and local political representatives, to obtain the kind of service "the people" deserve. Studies have shown that librarians as a professional group tend to be more work than initiation oriented. However, the frequent lack of community support for or interest in libraries must not be overlooked, nor the general low priority status of librarians as professionals, and of libraries as viable social and service institutions in American society.

This report cannot be concluded without giving special mention to the Upper Hudson Library Federation which serves as a library for libraries as well as being a library in its own right. The Federation could be said to represent symbolically the collective efforts of libraries in the Upper Hudson Region of New York State. It is through the Federation that there is the existing machinery for cooperation among the public libraries. Two staff members of the Federation are involved in bringing library materials to the Albany County Jail.

Federation meetings are not always well attended by Albany County library staff. It may be well to ascertain the reasons for this. It is felt by some of the librarians that the Federation is weak in providing consultant services, particularly in terms of funding source information. As was also pointed out by one librarian, the Upper Hudson region in New York State receives less money than any other region in the state.

The level of sophistication of librarians and their Boards in Albany County is widely varied. The Federation might well make available training sessions on funding sources, utilizing among other resources, local expertise. Related to this is the fact that one potential source of funding for Albany County public libraries is County taxes. This source presently yields no financial support. A federated approach to this possibility by the various libraries might be fruitful.

In view of the ingenuity and creativeness of some of the local programs, it is regrettable that more of the librarians do not take advantage of the Federation workshops, and that their Boards do not encourage such inter-communication. This could provide staff with - frequently inexpensive - ideas for programming proved viable elsewhere in the County.

Should these approaches not be feasible through the Federation, perhaps cooperative efforts toward resource and service sharing could be carried out through some other means.

Lastly, there could be more attempt on the parts of the librarians to serve their communities by increased interaction with and awareness of the existence of other service agencies in Albany County, and perhaps even an increased attempt to bring an expanded service orientation into the libraries. It is to be sincerely hoped that libraries in Albany County will in the future receive the support and recognition that they deserve, and that libraries in general can become what they should be: important sources of information, services, and culture in a free society.

Footnote

As a footnote it might be added that the public library services in Albany County are fortunate in having extensive backup resources available in that the County is a State Capital and a college and university center.

The Library of the State of New York, considered by many one of the finest in the nation, is available to the citizen for on-site reference use, and through inter-library loan as a resource. Next in size is State University of New York at Albany, which is available as reference, to inter-library, and also permits some direct circulation by citizens, particularly senior citizens. Siena College, Saint Rose, and a variety of specialist resources (Medical College, Schools of Law and Pharmacy) are available in the background. The Capital District Library Council, with its courtesy cards and the cooperation of the various libraries provides an enrichment factor not found in many localities. Additional regional resources can also be reached through network.

TABLE I

Public Libraries in Albany County
Items in Connections, Population Served, Items Per Capita for Service Population

Library or System	Items in Collection(s)		Population Served	Items Per Capita for Service Population
City of Albany (Harmanus Bleecker)	160,000		108,479	1.5
Altamont (Village)	11,247		1,540	7.3
Berne (Town)	6,100	(est)	2,000	3.0
Bethlehem (Town)	90,000		23,658	3.8
Cohoes (City) and Green Island (Town)	19,000		21,686	.9
Colonie (Town)	35,000		70,206	.5
Guilderland (Town)	22,000		23,111	1.0
Knox (Town)	0		1,872	0
Menands (Village)	19,000		9,169	2.1
Ravena-Coeymans (Town)	8,000		6,819	1.2
Rensselaerville	15,000	(est)	2,000	7.5
Voorheesville-New Scotland (Town)	28,000		8,738	3.2
Watervliet (City)	11,000		12,435	.9
Westerlo	0	(est)	1,906	0
Total: Albany County	424,347		282,910	1.5

In building the table, the number of items is that given by the librarians. When a range of numbers was given, the maximum number was used in all instances. Population data used are from the "Demographic Profile of Albany County", December 31, 1974, done by the Council of Community Services updating the population estimates for all census tracts in the County to that approximate date.

As may be seen by the use of the yardstick of four items per capita (see Note 1 above) the "quality" of the collections varies widely, with Altamont and Rensselaerville being well above the yardstick, and Bethlehem being at it. Berne and New Scotland come closely thereafter.

It is again cautioned that such a yardstick is oversimplistic.

Table II

Albany County Public Libraries Circulation, 1975
By Total Items Circulated, and by General Type
of Item, Including Interlibrary Borrowings.
Expressed as Number of Items, and Percapita
for Population of Service Area.

Library or System	Grand Total Circulation #	Per Capita	Books #	Per Capita	Non-book Materials #	Per Capita	Total Inter-Library Borrowed Circulation* #	Per Capita
City of Albany (Harmanus Bleecker)	552,616	5.1	498,034	4.6	54,582	.5	2,943	.03
Altamont (Village)	26,380	17.1	23,586	15.3	2,794	1.8	781	.5
Berne (Town)	14,054	7.0	13,579	6.8	475	.2	271	.1
Bethlehem (Town)	268,302	11.3	267,916	11.3	386	.02	1,045	.04
Cohoes (City) and Green Island	41,845	1.9	38,250	1.8	3,595	.2	1,045	.04
Colonie (Town)	178,723	2.5	177,381	2.5	1,342	.02	980	.01
Guilderland (Town)	69,192	3.0	64,611	2.8	4,581	.2	1,204	.05
Menands (Village)	9,469	1.0	7,600	.8	1,869	.2	166	.02
Ravena-Coeymans (Town)	11,931	1.7	11,862	1.7	69	.01	239	.04
Rensselaerville	9,203	4.6	8,239	4.1	964	.5	332	.2
Voorheesville-New Scotland (Town)	38,294	4.4	37,799	4.3	495	.06	672	.07
Watervliet	22,956	1.8	22,205	1.8	751	.06	244	.02
Total: Albany County	1,242,965	4.4	1,171,062	4.1	71,903	.3	9,923	.04

*Excluding bulk loans

By comparison with Table I, which outlines resources available, this table gives some perspective on the use of the resources by the localities. Basically the same picture emerges relative to Table I in that when the libraries are placed in rank order in each table (items per capita, v total circulation per capita) the top six in Table I are the top six in Table II, although relative positions vary.

Table III

Population Valuation and Operating Budget Data of Public Libraries in Albany County, With Per Capita and Ranking Analyses

Library	Population Served	Full Valuation Per Capita	Adjusted Operating Budget Excluding Capital	Per Capita	Range of Populations	Range of Per Capita Budgets	Rank As Per Capita
Albany	115,781	$6,738	$785,567	6.78	85,000-205,000	8.93-2.39	5 of 11
Altamont	1,561	9,806	11,794	7.55	1,500-1,600	19.51-1.35	4 of 13
Berne	2,037	8,084	3,917	1.92	1,990-2,090	12.07-.91	10 of 18
Cohoes	18,653	3,417	40,148	2.15	18,000-19,000	20.10-2.15	9 of 9
Colonie	69,147	10,718	131,159	1.89	60,000-80,000	15.09-1.29	11 of 14
Delmar	18,918	12,666	346,380	18.30	18,600-19,700	20.10-2.15	2 of 10
Guilderland	21,208	9,806	40,960	1.93	20.200-22,200	19.77-.87	14 of 16
Menands	2,920	10,718	7,492	2.56	2,800-3,000	15.80-1.81	10 of 14
Ravena	2,797	9,799	7,393	2.64	2,700-2,900	10.44-1.07	7 of 10
Rensselaerville	495	9,834	16,641	33.61	475-525	45.10-2.05	2 of 18
Voorheesville	6,216	9,131	40,069	6.44	6,050-6,450	15.34-1.48	2 of 13
Watervliet	12,404	3,936	10,334	.83	11,000-14,000	15.09-.83	20 of 20

Table III was constructed from data from "Public and Association Libraries" 1974 Statistics. Data for 1975 were as yet not available. There is no reason to assume the general picture would have changed in any major fashion. Data displayed are from the publication, with the exception of the last three columns. The "Range of Per Capitas" was obtained by arbitrarily taking the population range which bracketed the library under examination in the middle, seeking about 10 to 12 total libraries in the bracket. The population range selected is shown. The range of per-capitas then is from the Statistics. The ranking is within the bracket from the top down.

Conclusions

1. Except in the group of the largest population areas, like Albany, an upper per capita of $10 to $20 is not unusual, with $15 being common. (The adjusted per capita for all libraries in the report was $8.71).
2. There is little correlation between full valuation per capita and library budget as a per capita.
3. Albany, Altamont, Bethlehem, Rensselaerville, and Voorheesville were at or above the median per capita in their immediate population range, the other 7 were not.
4. There seems considerable room for improvement in library budgets in Albany County, and resources are available in terms of tax base in general.
5. Improvement will depend upon the interest of the communities and the Boards, therefore.

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